
Section Two

All wars and effective battle campaigns have strategic movements over terrain, time and resupply. The first contact with the enemy often immediately begins to change the battle plan itself. Unforeseen defenses, sudden and unexpected changes in weather, mistakes by the forces and deception by the enemy all keep battle commanders on their toes. The more effective and efficient an army's communication system, the better the information on which to make changes as needed.

In the 9 month war of Yahweh on the pantheon of Egypt, none of this is true. A perfect plan is executed flawlessly even with what might appear at the moment to be strategic retreats. The enemy behaves exactly as predicted since so foreordained. The soldiers (all two of them) do exactly as commanded executing the battle plan at each point as required. With almost casual ease the one and true God of heaven systematically dismantles and destroys the gods of the Egyptians.

We come this morning to pick up the prosecution of that war beginning at the fourth plague. Remember the structure of the battle plan: three attacks initiated by Aaron's rod and word; three attacks initiated by the spoken decree alone; three attacks initiated by Moses' rod and word. The last of each of the three attacks is a surprise attack with no prior warning. It is a coordinated and concerted attack on the Pharaoh and his gods, with enormous and intentional collateral damage on the general populace. The aim of the war is victory. Victory is defined as God being acknowledged as supreme and his people released from their bondage. May we stand in awe of the elegant wisdom and mighty work of our God, of Yahweh, the one and only true God.

Filth of Swarming Flies

(8:20-32)

²⁰ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Rise up early in the morning and present yourself to Pharaoh, as he goes out to the water, and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, "Let my people go, that they may serve me. ²¹ Or else, if you will not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies on you and your servants and your people, and into your houses. And the houses of the Egyptians shall be filled with swarms of flies, and also the ground on which they stand. ²² But on that day I will set apart the land of Goshen, where my people dwell, so that no swarms of flies shall be there, that you may know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth. ²³ Thus I will put a division between my people and your people. Tomorrow this sign shall happen.'"²⁴ And the LORD did so. There came great swarms of flies into the house of Pharaoh and into his servants' houses. Throughout all the land of Egypt the land was ruined by the swarms of flies.

For the opening of the second set of plagues, once again Moses is sent to confront the Pharaoh at the Nile early in the morning. He is here for his morning giving of the Nile for the people and his ritual bath. Moses is here to represent the one true God and His demands to release His people. If Pharaoh will not let God's people go to worship and serve the LORD, then God will cause flies to rise up and cover the land.

In this plague, for the first time, God begins to make a distinction between Israelites and Egyptians. He will mark out the land of Goshen where the Israelites live as a safe place. Flies will cover all the land of Egypt. But Goshen will be a fly-free zone. In this way, God will not only demonstrate His ability to bring the flies but to control where they spawn and where they go. What a sight this must of

have been. Egypt quivering with a black cloak of filthy flies or scarab beetles. There, in the land of Goshen, the swarm does not arise and does not go.



This plague may have been against Khephera, a scarab-headed god regarded as a manifestation of Atum or Ra. It was supposed to be god of the resurrection, perhaps because the dung ball it rolled around, and in which it laid its egg, produced a "new creation." Priests wore scarabs as charms. It is very likely that the "swarms" in this passage were swarms of the scarab beetle. The scarab was actually a dung beetle -- an insect that feeds on the dung in the fields. The plague of swarms of scarabs, with mandibles that could saw through wood, was destructive and worse than termites! Deification of the scarab beetle is still seen in Egypt today. Amon-Ra, the creator and king of the gods, had the head of a beetle. "Ra, the Sole Creator was visible to the people of Egypt as the disc of the sun, but they knew him in many other forms. He could appear as a crowned man, a falcon or a man with a falcon's head and, as the scarab beetle pushes a round ball of dung in front of it, the Egyptians pictured Ra as a scarab pushing the sun across the sky." (Geraldine Harris, *Gods & Pharaohs from Egyptian Mythology*, p. 24).

A more likely possibility is that this plague is against Beelzebub, whose name literally means, "lord of the flies". This god was worshipped much in the same way as the scarab. The fly whose images were worshipped was a buzzing, biting bane. The New Testament applies this name to Satan directly. He is named by Jesus as the power behind Beelzebub and is called Beelzebub.

²⁵ Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and said, "Go, sacrifice to your God within the land."

²⁶ But Moses said, "It would not be right to do so, for the offerings we shall sacrifice to the LORD our God are an abomination to the Egyptians. If we sacrifice offerings abominable to the Egyptians before their eyes, will they not stone us?" ²⁷ We must go three days' journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the LORD our God as he tells us." ²⁸ So Pharaoh said, "I will let you go to sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only you must not go very far away. Plead for me." ²⁹ Then Moses said, "Behold, I am going out from you and I will plead with the LORD that the swarms of flies may depart from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people, tomorrow. Only let not Pharaoh cheat again by not letting the people go to sacrifice to the LORD." ³⁰ So Moses went out from Pharaoh and prayed to the LORD. ³¹ And the LORD did as

Moses asked, and removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, from his servants, and from his people; not one remained. ³² But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and did not let the people go.

Pharaoh screams for Moses and Aaron. They appear before him. The Pharaoh is now ready to make his first concession. Israel may have a holiday for sacrifice, but they have to stay in the boundaries of Egypt. I am humored by Moses' continual provocation and at times apparently deceptive responses to Pharaoh. They cannot worship and serve the LORD in Egypt because their sacrifices are abominable to the Egyptians. When the Egyptians see what is being done, they will rise up and stone the Jews. Pharaoh responds with his own lie. They can go into the wilderness but they have to stay close by.

So Moses pleads with the Lord and the Lord removes the flies, every one of them so that none are left. This is a great miracle. It is a deconstruction of the Egyptian god. The LORD brought the flies – that is amazing. The Egyptians may have had a natural explanation for what happened, like many today. However, the sudden and absolute disappearance of this pest is an undeniable miracle. Of course, the Pharaoh hardens his heart and will not let the people go.

Egyptian Livestock Slaughtered

(9:1-7)

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, "Let my people go, that they may serve me. ² For if you refuse to let them go and still hold them, ³ behold, the hand of the LORD will fall with a very severe plague upon your livestock that are in the field, the horses, the donkeys, the camels, the herds, and the flocks. ⁴ But the LORD will make a distinction between the livestock of Israel and the livestock of Egypt, so that nothing of all that belongs to the people of Israel shall die.'" ⁵ And the LORD set a time, saying, "Tomorrow the LORD will do this thing in the land." ⁶ And the next day the LORD did this thing. All the livestock of the Egyptians died, but not one of the livestock of the people of Israel died. ⁷ And Pharaoh sent, and behold, not one of the livestock of Israel was dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go.

God now announces through Moses that He will bring a dire and deadly plague on all the livestock of the Egyptians. This horrific plague will kill all the livestock of Egypt. Not one will be left. This will happen at a certain time on the following day, demonstrating that it is no natural disease spread by the gnats and flies. And the Lord will continue to protect the land of Goshen and His people who live there. None of their livestock would die.

The next day, the people are not released. At the exact time predicted, all over Egypt all the livestock begin to sicken and die. The pestilence spreads from animal to animal, from kind to kind until all sicken and die. Think of the fear and panic that mad-cow disease caused several years ago in Europe. Think of the frightening staggering and dying of all the Egyptian livestock. This will have enormous economic impact on Egypt. They will have no meat to eat. They have all these carcasses to deal with. The only place they can go to buy new stock for rebuilding their herds and provisioning their dinner tables is to Goshen. The prosperous herds of the Israelites were untouched by the deadly plague. Now, the Egyptians will have to trade with them further impoverishing the Egyptians and enriching the Israelites.

This judgment was against the bull god (revered as early as the Archaic Period (35), and the sacred cattle of Hathor, the cow-headed love goddess. It was a special reproach to pharaoh who worshipped Hathor. Hathor, whose name means "house of Horus," was sacred as early as the Old Kingdom (41, 58). Other gods associated with cattle were Ptah and Amon. The symbol of the bull was the symbol of pharaoh himself. In the "Hymn to Amon," *it is difficult to distinguish the Pharaoh from the bull*. The title is: "Adoration of Amunre (Amon-Ra), Bull of Heliopolus, chiefest of all gods, the good god, the beloved, who giveth life to all that is warm, and to every good herd."

Praise be to thee, Amunre, Lord of Karnak, who presideth in Thebes. Bull of his Mother, the first on his field! Wide of stride, first in Upper Egypt. . . . Greatest of heaven, eldest of earth, lord of what existeth, who abideth in all things. Unique in his nature among the gods, goodly bull of the Nine Gods, chiefest of all gods. Lord of Truth, father of the gods, who maketh mankind, and createth beast. (Erman, p. 283.)



So what will the bull god do? How will he stand up to the onslaught of Yahweh from heaven and His prophet on earth? He can do nothing but watch all the dying around him. What will Pharaoh do? He checks to see if Israel's livestock live. And they do. He stiffens his neck and hardens his heart. He will NOT let them go. To do so now would be to acknowledge defeat.

Sore Pain of Boils

(9:8-12)

And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Take handfuls of soot from the kiln, and let Moses throw them in the air in the sight of Pharaoh. ⁹ It shall become fine dust over all the land of Egypt, and become boils breaking out in sores on man and beast throughout all the land of Egypt." ¹⁰ So they took soot from the kiln and stood before Pharaoh. And Moses threw it in the air, and it became boils breaking out in sores on man and beast. ¹¹ And the magicians could not stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boils came upon the magicians and upon all the Egyptians. ¹² But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had spoken to Moses.

Most of the plagues to this point have made life difficult for the Egyptians. The land stunk with blood, frog carcasses, teemed with gnats and flies and now reeks with dying livestock. Now, the Egyptians will suffer terrible physical pain.

Moses and Aaron are sent with soot to throw in the air in Pharaoh's presence. This soot came from the kilns. These kilns were where their bricks were made. Pharaoh and the people had cause terrible hardship in the labor to make bricks. Retribution is now coming. The fine dust of kiln soot blows across the land. Idol worshipping men and women, boys and girls break out in hideous boils. In a particular irony, the priests are so covered in boils that they can no longer attend the sessions between Moses, Aaron and the Pharaoh.

If you have never had a boil, it is hard to imagine the pain. Shingles and adult chicken pox can be painful like this. So there is the personal pain and suffering as well as the emotional pain of seeing spouses and children suffering. Imagine the difficulties as self-centered sinners are all, household by household, suffering in terrible pain.



The plague of boils is against the god of healing, Im-Hotep (69), an outstanding nobleman of the Old Kingdom. Although not actually deified until later than the time of the Exodus, he was no doubt revered at this time. But he could do nothing to help the Egyptians. The goddess Sekhmet was also known for her healing ability (106). This plague would have also been an affront to Serapis, the deity in charge of healing, and to Thoth, the ibis-headed god of intelligence and medical learning.

So who will prevent this epidemic? Who will stand against the boil laden kiln born dust of Yahweh? Not Im-Hotep. Not Sekhmet. Not Thoth. They are powerless to prevent or to heal the boils. They are powerless because they are nothing. They are the figment of men's imaginations. Here, priests of Egypt, imagine this, these horrible boils. Now, can you even stand in the presence of your god, Pharaoh, much less in the presence of Yahweh's messengers?

But what about us? We have our own deities like this. For many people health is an idolatry with either a certain way of eating, or a certain kind of supplements or certain kinds of doctors all ensuring us a measure of health and well-being. While medicine has provided many wonderful benefits in our world and time, it may still be pagan as it calls forth our worship, our service of it. But we all know that the sovereign God is not bound to the disciplines of medicine. He may well even continue to afflict our bodies in order to deliver our souls from our idols, however well-meaning they may be.

Destruction of Hail from Heaven

(9:13-35)

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Rise up early in the morning and present yourself before Pharaoh and say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, "Let my people go, that they may serve me. ¹⁴ For this time I will send all my plagues on you yourself, and on your servants and your people, so that you may know that there is none like me in all the earth. ¹⁵ For by now I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth. ¹⁶ But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth. ¹⁷ You are still exalting yourself against my people and will not let them go. ¹⁸ Behold, about this time tomorrow I will cause very heavy hail to fall, such as never has been in Egypt from the day it was founded until now. ¹⁹ Now therefore send, get your livestock and all that you have in the field into safe shelter, for every man and beast that is in the field and is not brought home will die when the hail falls on them.' " ²⁰ Then whoever feared the word of the LORD among the servants of Pharaoh hurried his slaves and his livestock into the houses, ²¹ but whoever did not pay attention to the word of the LORD left his slaves and his livestock in the field.

Here is the severe wrath and mercy of God. A warning to the Pharaoh and to his people is issued. If they will not let Israel go, then a mighty disaster will fall on them such has never happened since the founding of Egypt. There will fall from heaven hail that will destroy the crops and kill anyone out in it. God graciously warns the Egyptians to take their remaining livestock and slaves and get them under roof.

Note that Romans 9 quote in verse 16-17. God had raised up Pharaoh for this very purpose to demonstrate that Yahweh, the LORD was God alone. He aimed for the global proclamation of His sovereign authority. Here is a foreshadowing of the gospel. In the midst of attacking the idols of a people group, the messengers of God warn of the judgment to come, the way of deliverance now and lead God's redeemed people out of slavery. Wicked, pagan rulers are raised up and then smashed by the power of God to demonstrate that He is the LORD.

Those who feared God's Word did what Moses warned. The fear here is one of respecting and fearing the One who speaks, whose word it is. This is a word for the Israelites and all of God's people: we will not obey the Word of God where we do not fear the God of the Word. Cultivating a fear of God enables obedience. Having a fear of God wrought obedience even in pagan Egyptians. They hid from the wrath about to fall from heaven.

The sky goddess Nut was "the mother of the sun-god Ra, whom she swallowed in the evening and gave birth to again in the morning" (90). She was especially culpable in this plague in that she was supposed to protect the land from destructions which came down from heaven. Exodus 9:31 mentions that the flax and barley were hit. Destruction of the flax was trying because it was used to wrap mummies and to make clothes.



²² Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven, so that there may be hail in all the land of Egypt, on man and beast and every plant of the field, in the land of Egypt." ²³ Then Moses stretched out his staff toward heaven, and the LORD sent thunder and hail, and fire ran down to the earth. And the LORD rained hail upon the land of Egypt. ²⁴ There was hail and fire flashing continually in the midst of the hail, very heavy hail, such as had never been in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation. ²⁵ The hail struck down everything that was in the field in all the land of Egypt, both man and beast. And the hail struck down every plant of the field and broke every tree of the field. ²⁶ Only in the land of Goshen, where the people of Israel were, was there no hail.

Now the last set of the assaults on Egypt's pantheon begins. Moses' rod of judgment stretches out over the land and towards the heavens. And it begins to hail in the midst of fierce lightning. This is the mother of all thunderstorms, raging across all the land of Egypt. It is thick and heavy. The word here for heavy is a form of the word for hard. Pharaoh's hard heart has earned them hard hail from heaven. The one true God of heaven who sits enthroned on the sides of north through the simple sweep of a shepherd's rod rains down death and destruction on those who did not fear His Word and did not heed His gracious warning. Only in Goshen was there no hail. The people of God are safe because God has made it so. Yes, sheltered safe even in the midst of outpoured wrath.

²⁷ Then Pharaoh sent and called Moses and Aaron and said to them, "This time I have sinned; the LORD is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong. ²⁸ Plead with the LORD, for there has been enough of God's thunder and hail. I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer." ²⁹ Moses said to him, "As soon as I have gone out of the city, I will stretch out my hands to the LORD. The thunder will cease, and there will be no more hail, so that you may know that the earth is the LORD's. ³⁰ But as for you and your servants, I know that you do not yet fear the LORD God." ³¹ (The flax and the barley were struck down, for the barley was in the ear and the flax was in bud. ³² But the wheat and the emmer were not struck down, for they are late in coming up.) ³³ So Moses went out of the city from Pharaoh and stretched out his hands to the LORD, and the thunder and the hail ceased, and the rain no longer poured upon the earth. ³⁴ But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet again and hardened his heart, he and his servants. ³⁵ So the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people of Israel go, just as the LORD had spoken through Moses.

The pounding is producing repentance! Pharaoh has sinned. He is humbled. Quickly come. Take away the hail. He has been so wrong. Plead with the LORD. Not just plead with your god. Here is the first full acknowledgment of God as LORD. But is it genuine? Is this true repentance? Or is it vain regret? Moses strides outside the city, stretches out interceding hands to heaven and the hail stops. Immediately. It was still. All across the land devastation and death and blackened earth. Pharaoh's heart was hardened. His repentance was false. HE will not let them go.

Nut was also considered by the Egyptians to be the mother of five other gods: Osiris, Hathor, Set, Isis, and Nephthys. During this plague, you have to wonder: Where was Shu, the wind god? Where was Horus, the hawk-headed sky god of Upper Egypt? Isis and Seth supposedly protected the crops, but the burned fields testified of their impotence. Although this plague would have caused widespread devastation, a few trees remained for the locusts of the next plague to devour.

A Blanket of Locusts

(10:1-20)

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may show these signs of mine among them, ² and that you may tell in the hearing of your son and of your grandson how I have dealt harshly with the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them, that you may know that I am the LORD."

³ So Moses and Aaron went in to Pharaoh and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, the God of the Hebrews, 'How long will you refuse to humble yourself before me? Let my people go, that they may serve me. ⁴ For if you refuse to let my people go, behold, tomorrow I will bring locusts into your country, ⁵ and they shall cover the face of the land, so that no one can see the land. And they shall eat what is left to you after the hail, and they shall eat every tree of yours that grows in the field, ⁶ and they shall fill your houses and the houses of all your servants and of all the Egyptians, as neither your fathers nor your grandfathers have seen, from the day they came on earth to this day.'" Then he turned and went out from Pharaoh.

⁷ Then Pharaoh's servants said to him, "How long shall this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God. Do you not yet understand that Egypt is ruined?" ⁸ So Moses and Aaron were brought back to Pharaoh. And he said to them, "Go, serve the LORD your God. But which ones are to go?" ⁹ Moses said, "We will go with our young and our old. We will go with our sons and daughters and with our flocks and herds, for we must hold a feast to the LORD." ¹⁰ But he said to them, "The LORD be with you, if ever I let you and your little ones go! Look, you have some evil purpose in mind. ¹¹ No! Go, the men among you, and serve the LORD, for that is what you are asking." And they were driven out from Pharaoh's presence.

Here is a call to ministry. "Messenger, go to this person because I have hardened their heart and intend to deal harshly with them so that they will know I am God you will have stories for your children and grandchildren about what a great God I am." So Moses does exactly that. If the Pharaoh will not truly repent, what is left of the crops and trees will now be destroyed by a vast plague of locusts. Pharaoh now openly attacks Moses and Aaron. He accuses them of having an evil purpose. He drives them out of his presence. What in the world does he think is going to happen?

¹² Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt for the locusts, so that they may come upon the land of Egypt and eat every plant in the land, all that the hail has left." ¹³ So Moses stretched out his staff over the land of Egypt, and the LORD brought an east wind upon the land all that day and all that night. When it was morning, the east wind had brought the locusts. ¹⁴ The locusts came up over all the land of Egypt and settled on the whole country of Egypt, such a dense swarm of locusts as had never been before, nor ever will be again. ¹⁵ They covered the face of the whole land, so that the land was darkened, and they ate all the plants in the land and all the fruit of the trees that the hail had left. Not a green thing remained, neither tree nor plant of the field, through all the land of Egypt.

The staff of judgment is stretched out over the land and a vast swarm of locusts blankets the land. Do not think of a thin sheet of insects covering the grass like dew. I have seen this in Africa. Think of a mile high swarm the looks like a dust storm coating everything in squirming green. The locusts on the African continent are huge. I have seen them (and eaten them fried) longer than my hand when I was 7 or 8. Remember the cicadae two years ago. Across Egypt, this vast horde of whirring, chirping insects roars darkening the sky, blanketing every living plant, chewing bare every green leaf.

The locust-headed god was Senehem. During the plague, the locusts were so thick that the "eye of the earth" was darkened (Exodus 10:5). One of the epithets of the sun-god Ra was "the eye of Ra." By causing darkness while the sun was shining, Ra was discredited. In bringing this pestilence, God has shown the powerlessness of all the talisman and protector gods. They are helpless to hold back the horde of locusts because they are nothing and Yahweh is LORD.



¹⁶ Then Pharaoh hastily called Moses and Aaron and said, "I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you. ¹⁷ Now therefore, forgive my sin, please, only this once, and plead with the LORD your God only to remove this death from me." ¹⁸ So he went out from Pharaoh and pleaded with the LORD. ¹⁹ And the LORD turned the wind into a very strong west wind, which lifted the locusts and drove them into the Red Sea. Not a single locust was left in all the country of Egypt. ²⁰ But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go.

The vast plague of locusts rides the west wind of God into the sea. Does Pharaoh understand that this is what is happening to him? The mighty power of God that ends this plague will soon sweep Pharaoh and the mighty of his armies to join the locusts in the Red Sea.

Again, the gods of Egypt were silent. You have to wonder what their worshippers thought as they saw the devastation. Where was Nepri, the god of grain? Where was Ermutet, the goddess of childbirth and crops? Isis is silent once again. Thermuthis, the goddess of fertility and the harvest was speechless. Seth, a god of crops, was also mute. Where is there help? Why trust in them?

Three Days of Deep Darkness

(10:21-28)

²¹ Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness to be felt." ²² So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was pitch darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. ²³ They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the people of Israel had light where they lived. ²⁴ Then Pharaoh called Moses and said, "Go, serve the LORD; your little ones also may go with you; only let your flocks and your herds remain behind." ²⁵ But Moses said, "You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God. ²⁶ Our livestock also must go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for we must take of them to serve the LORD our God, and we do not know with what we must serve the LORD until we arrive there." ²⁷ But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go. ²⁸ Then Pharaoh said to him, "Get away from me; take care never to see my face again, for on the day you see my face you shall die." ²⁹ Moses said, "As you say! I will not see your face again."

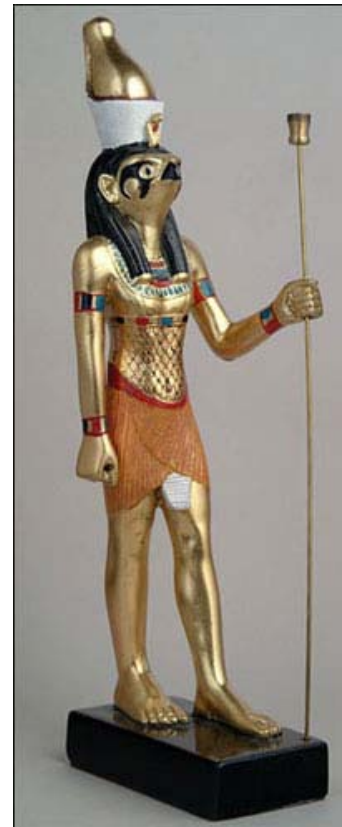
Darkness. Pitch blackness. Cannot see your hand in front of your face, darkness. The kind of darkness that cannot be dispelled by lighting a torch. So, in the darkness the LORD causes, the Egyptians do not arise from bed. This is the kind of darkness you can feel. It crawls across your skin. It is *real* and *alive*. But away in Goshen, there is light. The sun shines, sets and the moon rises. Israel has light, has day and night. Imagine standing at the edge of Goshen. Your shadow runs out to the border and then is absorbed by the miles high blackness that is not just the absence of light but eats the light.

In Egyptian mythology Horus was the god of light who personified the life-giving power of the Sun. He was usually represented as a falcon-headed man wearing a sun disk as a crown. The reigning kings of Egypt were believed to be incarnations of the god Horus.

One of the greatest gods of Egypt, next to the pharaoh, was the sun. The sun-god Amon-Ra was the principle deity of the pantheon. He made all growth possible. Pharaoh called *himself* "son of the sun." With three days of darkness, he is scorned.

One of many hymns to the sun may help us feel their devotion to this deity:

Beautiful is thine appearing in the horizon of heaven, thou living sun, the first who lived. Thou risest in the eastern horizon, and fillest every land with thy beauty. Thou art beautiful and great, and glistenest, and art high above every land. Thy rays, they encompass the lands, so far as all that thou hast created. Thou art Ra, and thou reachest unto their end and subduest them for thy dear son [the Pharaoh]. Thou art afar, yet are thy rays upon the earth . . . etc., *ad nauseum*. (Erman, p. 289.)



This darkness descends for three days. Here is the darkness of death outside of God. Here are the depths of the grave. Here is the blackness of hell. This is the living death. This is a cry on a wooden cross and three days of darkness in the depths of the earth, behind a rolled up and sealed stone. Do not imagine hell as a place of light just because it is a place of fire. No, it is a soul eating darkness. It is the utter blackness of, "NO GOD."

But then there is light, light for God's people. Here are the faithful mercies of God who shields his people from the pestilence of sin and the darkness of hell. Ah, here is where the soul takes hope. Here is where we trust. We have been transferred out of the realm of darkness into the kingdom of His beloved Son. In Heaven, where God manifests His presence in ephemeral glory and through the glorified Son, there is light. There is no darkness. And in the new heaven and new earth there will be no Egyptian darkness there for Jesus' glory is the light of that place and age.

Once again, the gods of Egypt were silent. Where was Ptah, the chief god of Memphis, and the one who created the moon, the sun and the earth? Where are Atum, the sun god and creator who was worshiped at Heliopolis, the major center of sun worship? Where was Tem, the god of the sunset? Where was Shu, the god of sunlight and air?

Section Two

Conclusion

May all that Egypt represents become a stench in our nostrils. May we learn to hate sin and the world. May this hate come from a pure and holy love for God.

May I call on each of us to carefully examine our own idols. Many of them are good things that come to us through pagan knowledge. They bring us blessings under God's hand. But when they begin to master us and demand our service, then we have bowed our knee at a false god. Yes, for example, technology and medicine are good things. But O, if you think they will deliver you from the present or future wrath of God, what a disappointment in that sad day.

We must learn to discern false repentance in our own lives. Pharaoh repented and acknowledged his sin, but then went straight back to his folly. This is vain regret not true repentance. Vain regret is when we change our minds about a sin in order to avoid the dire consequence. But vain regret will soon return to its sin and lead eventually to death. It is not the repentance God requires. God's gift of repentance changes us. Do you have vain regret? Or are you genuinely repentant over your sins?

In hearing all the thundering judgment of the LORD, do you fear His Word? Do you hear in such a way, not to harden your heart but to bow with humble faith, repentance and obedience? Does your proud, stubborn, heard heart hear these judgments and the future bane for unbelievers and rebel? Do you push back hard? Do you wonder who could worship such a One? Have we become so slick and sweet in Christendom that there is little place for the one and true God? Is not the fierce love of God all the more amazing against the frightening backdrop of fearsome wrath? Do you

fear God who both loves His own with passion to defend their case and cause so that He will utterly obliterate those who resist His power and deny His Name?

An old creed says, "And he [Jesus] descended into hell..." Why did the Lord Jesus Christ descend into the darkness of hell? Why three days in the grave? Because Sunday morning came. He arose. He is alive. He has overcome death by dying and living again. This is not reincarnation; this is resurrection. Through the darkness of death and suffering of the judgment of God, mercy flows to His people. Salvation is purchased. Wrath is settled.

Before you recoil in horror at the small glimpse these plagues have given us of the awful wrath of God, hear this. We know the greatness of God's immeasurable mercy and love to us when we know how much we deserve the immeasurable power of God's wrath. We will love Jesus all the more when we believe that He has taken all that these plagues represent on Himself in our place.

Are you dwelling in the darkness? Would you not this morning throw yourself on the mercies of God? Will you not plead with him to deliver you from the wrath to come? Will you believe in Him and bow to Him as He declares Himself to be? There in that believing and bowing are the sweet mercies of the loving Savior for you.

Notes